

CHAPTER-IV

RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS OF NAYAKS

A religious monument is a place of worship where different religious traditions, practices, beliefs, and architectural achievements are revealed. They continue to be sources of inspiration, reflection, and spiritual connection for people around the world.¹ They played an important role in uniting people through the various ritual activities. The temples were also the place of peaceful assembly of the society and resting place of other similar fine arts.² The beginning of the temple construction in south India is attributed to the Pallavas, who ruled the Tamil country during the 6th and 7th century C.E. The Hindus and Jains of south India adopted the stone medium and started erecting rock-cut cave temples. From the Pallava Period temple building in both rock-cut and structural forms began to flourish.³ During the Chola period massive yet artistically ornate and elegant structures were developed. Under the Vijayanagar and Nayak rule enormous temples with attractive mandapas, huge pillars, soaring towers (gopura) and large temple tanks (teppakulam) continued to be built. Particularly the temple constructions became very spirited during the Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar periods.⁴ Temple continued to be the main centre of public worship among the Hindus.

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1. Francis, W., *Madura Gazetteer*, New Delhi (1906), reprint 2000, p. 42.
 2. Report on Madura District, 20 August 1816, M.C.R, Vol. 1258, pp. 41-48.
 3. A.K. Paranthamanar, *Madurai Nayakkar Varalaru* (in Tamil), Chennai, 1966, p.229.
 4. Indian Antiquary, Vol.XXII, p.67. and S.I.I. Vol. XIV, No.3.

The direct worship of gods and goddess forms the focal point of the religious activities embraced by the Hindu temples. Land were given to temple officials as remuneration for their services directly by the donor or provided for their subsistence in the donation itself. The temples were the custodians of religious beliefs and exercised almost complete control over their devotees. They also served as the centres for the propagation of the religious values.⁵ In the caste society, the temple served as an integrating player linking the high and low in service. Temple served often as the town-hall, where people assembled to consider local affairs or to hear the exposition of sacred literature. Marriages were celebrated in temples. The kings and nobles in those days used to meet the citizens in temples and even coronations and victory celebrations of king were performed in temples. Temples were also the centers of service activities.⁶ The monasteries attached to temple were almost centers of selfless service. Several disputes among the people of the society were also settled in the temples, which were acted as a court of law.⁷ During the war period, people used to take shelter in the temples. The Indian temples has recognized as a main economic centre of the state. The temple as an employer of large number of persons may be seen in the medieval Tamil inscriptions from the temples of Tanjavur and Madurai regions.⁸ The temples of India had been a great strengthening

5. Vijayaghunathan, T., ***The Great Temple of Madurai***, Madurai, 2002.P.202

6. Srinivasan, R., ***Temples of South India***, Bombay, 1957.P.97

7. Banerjee, B.N.,***Hindu Culture, Customs and Ceremony***, Delhi,P.124
1979.

8. Ibid., p.145

factor in keeping the people united. As a wealthy institution and as the owner of vast landed properties the temple was a large employer. Economic activities involving stone – masonry ,especially after the advent of the new idea of the ‘stone temple’ carpentry, jewellery, goldsmith, icon-making, garland making, special textiles and numerous other ancillary industrial activities centered round the temple. These industries gave employment to a variety of people in the village or township.⁹ Among the regular employees the priests, Tiruppadiyam Paduvar, uvaccar, carpenter, watchman, pancacarya, nattuvan, kaṇakkukaṇi, were important. They were all granted land for their maintenance.¹⁰ As each temple had a treasury, it served the purpose of a bank. The large endowments in the form of land, gold and money bestowed on temple by the various donors of the society made the temples a richest institution. Particularly, many donors, from royal family to the individuals, donated gold and money to the temples. Number of inscriptions and literary evidences give us glimpses of educational services rendered by the temple.¹¹ Besides the Buddhist and Jaina monasteries, the Hindu temple also played vital role in promotion of education. The pupils of the temple school namely, kovil padasala learned spiritual education from the religious gurus. Those who studied there were given both free food and education. Those who well versed in Vedic and Puranic traditions were appointed as religious teacher in the temples.¹²

9. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (A.R.E), 403 of 1908.

10. A.Appadorai, ***Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000-1500 A.D)***, Vol. I (University of Madras, 1990) p.274..

11. South Indian Inscriptions(S.I.I), II, 66.

12. T.V.Mahalingam and K.Palaniappan, ***The Great Temple of Madurai***, Madurai, 1963, p.91.

These institutions served as great residential colleges and provided facilities for the study of religion, literature as well as various secular subjects. The chief aim of the 'Hindu education system was the training of the mind as an instrument of knowledge. As a cultural centre, the temple witnessed the evolution of different schools of art, architecture, painting, music and dance in different parts of the country, which brought out a variety of systems in holistic and performing arts. The temples were also a place of religious conversation and musical discussions. All these have facilitated the propagation of religion, music, dance and other fine arts in the society.¹³ The temples are built for the purpose of focusing the power of the lord in a consecrated idol and invoking the Almighty's blessings for the spiritual nourishment of the entire humanity.¹⁴ Apart from this the temples stand as a store house of ancient knowledge of traditions and practices influencing the socio-cultural life of the people giving an uninterrupted continuity of religious and social values.¹⁵ In India temples are found everywhere and they are of varied scales from a small village temple to huge temple complexes with complex architecture and artististic feat. Traditionally, the temple is a sacred structure and also an indicative of abode of god or gods.¹⁶ However the Indian temples are not only the abode of God and place of worship, but they are also the cradle of knowledge, art, architecture and

13. T.Paramasivan, ***Theivankalum, Samuga Marapukalum*** (in Tamil), Madras, 1995, p.201.

14. Pandithuraiathevar, P. (ed.), ***Maduraithala Varalaru, Sentamil Prasuram***, Madurai, 1928.P.123

15. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, S., ***Source of Vijayanagar History***, Delhi, 1986, pp. 23-24.

16. Francis, W., ***Madura Gazetteer***, New Delhi (1906), reprint 2000, p. 42.

culture. The practices and traditions of temples exist to present time almost unchanged with great influence the socio-cultural life of the people. A Hindu temple is believed to be the earthly abode of the deity and the place where the devotees invoke the blessings of the deity. Many temples resemble the palace architecture or even richer in its architecture, this is because the deity is considered as the 'Rajadhi-raja' which means the king of kings.¹⁷ Temples act as the connecting points of high significance in the religion and culture and a place of collective worship.¹⁸ The ideology behind the designing of Hindu temples is to provide the easiest link between men and the gods. It is the place where one can feel being close to god and experience a spiritual cleansing. The Hindu temple acts as a platform for 'Bhakti yoga' where god's presence can be felt and through rituals and ceremonies men can discover the divine knowledge.¹⁹ A temple from the Latin 'templum' is a structure usually built for the purpose of, and always dedicated to, religious or spiritual activities including prayer, meditation, sacrifice and worship.²⁰ The Hindu temple is an institution of immemorial antiquity which are called by different names in different regions of the country as 'Mandir' in Hindi derived from the Sanskrit word Mandira, 'Kovil' in tamil, 'Devasthanam' in Kannada, 'Devaalaya' in Telugu.²¹ In general the hindu temple can be an

17. Vriddhagirisan, V., ***The Nayak of Tanjore***, New Delhi, 1995, p. 169.

18. Mahalingam, T.V., ***South Indian Polity***, Madras, 1955, pp. 327 and 329.

19. Nelson, J.H., ***The Madura Country A Manual, Part -II***, 1868, reprint 1989, pp. 154-156.

20. Robert Sewell, ***The Historical Inscriptions of South India and Outlines of Political History***, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 287-288.

21. Rangacharya, V., ***A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency***, Vol.II, New Delhi, 1985, pp.1018-1019.

isolated structure or part of a complex. They not only play an important part in the religious life of the people but also in the socio-cultural life and the economy. The temple was secondary to both divine presence and ritual action, serving as the setting for both. Without them, it was merely an empty building, a stage bereft of actors and action.²² The ancient Indian temples still remain preserved as they are mostly built of highly enduring materials like granite and other stone. The construction of temple in stone is the most distinctive expression of Hindu architecture. The highly evolved techniques of excavating and cutting blocks of stone constitute one of the major technical achievements associated with the history of the Hindu temple. Indian temples have been a source of attraction, not only as a place of worship for the devout, but also as an architectural marvel for the curious tourist.²³ The history of northern style of temple begins from the Guptas and their successors from 5th to 7th century and Advanced to Early chalukyas from 7th to 8th century, the Kalingas and Eastern Gangas from 8th to 13th century, the Pratiharas and Chandellas from 8th to 11th century, the Maitrakas and the Solankis from 8th to 13th century and the Rajputanas from 8th to 12th century. The Hindu temple construction during the medieval period from 6th-13th centuries took place on a magnificent scale comparable to the building of churches and cathedrals in the medieval Europe.²⁴ Hindu temple architecture reached to its final form by combining

22. Henry Heras, ***South India under the Vijayanagar Empire, Vol-II***, New Delhi, 1980, p. 359

23. Srinivasachari, C.S., "***The Poligar System in Tamil Country; Its Origin and Growth***" Indian Historical Record Commission Proceedings of Meeting, Nagpur, Vol-II, Calcutta, 1928, pp. 100-101

24. Ibid.,p.105

influences from both the northern and southern India and probably also from the cultures of invaders who continued to enter India from the north-west during this period.²⁵ The history of southern style of temples begins with the Early Chalukyas, and Kalchuris from 6th to 8th century and advanced to the Pallavas from 7th to 8th centuries, the Rashtrakutas from 8th to 10th century, the Cholas from 10th to 11th century, the Hoyshalas and Later Chalukyas from 11th to 14th century and the Vijayanagaras and the Nayaks from 15th to 17th century. The southern style Dravidian temples had its genesis during the age of the Pallavas of Kanchipuram and later developed by the Chalukyas of Badami and Pandias of Madurai.²⁶ The temple complexes at Mamallapuram earlier known as Mahabalipuram in Tamil nadu, Lakshman temple in Aihole and Kasinatha temple in Pattadakal are examples of this style of architecture. The temples in the South India in the early 7th to 8th century and later in the 13th century developed the stellate plans meaning the plan of the garbhagriha was in the elaborate star shaped. In the South Indian Temples the sanctum or the garbhagriha rises above the socle (adhisthana), consisting of series of mouldings which differ from the North Indian temples. The rituals of 'laying of first brick' and 'laying of the final brick' should be carried out even for the gopuras.²⁷ The management of the temple was in the hands of either an individual or a group of persons known as sthanattar who administered the temple

25. G.O. No. 579 Revenue Department, 29 April 1859; also Report on Madura District, Madura Collectorate Records, Vol. 9077, (No Date), pp. 12 and 30.

26. Report on Madura District, 20 August 1816, M.C.R, Vol. 1258, pp. 41-48.

27. Nelson, J.H., ***The Madura Country A Manual, Part III***, 1868, reprint (1989), pp. 154-156.

properties, controlled the temple servants and carefully Guarded the interests of the temple. The temples usually employed various personalities like Priests (sivacharyas, bhattas), assistants of priests (tavasigal), non-brahman priests, scholars and reciters, manager of the temple (koyil-kelvi) administration Staffs (panmahesvaras), treasurers (pandarattar), superintendents (devakanmigal), accountants (koil-kanakku), musicians, singers, gardeners, artisans, dancing girls. Besides the above the temple also employed many servants mainly for watchmen (meykaval), sweeping and smearing of cow-dung in the temple, bringing water, making garlands, looking after the lamps (tiruvilakkukkudi), pounding the paddy to remove husk from the rice for sacred food offering, carrying plates along with the deity during the festival occasions, waving the fly whisks to the deity and for many other menial works.²⁸ The huge number of employees deployed in the temple services in the middle ages made the position of the temple as an employer of considerable important. According to inscriptions Nayaks were initially appointed by Vijayanagara rulers to look after the revival and conduct of regular worship and restoration of lands and property of temples in the Coromandel region during the 14th century.²⁹ Several inscriptions of this period show many instances of misappropriation of temple properties, by protectors of the temple. Certain Brahmanas had stolen gold from the treasury of the temple. They were deprived of rights in temple worship and management of temple lands. Nambisivappaya, an officer of the temple

28. T.V. Mahalingam, ***Economic Life in the Vijayanagar Empire*** (University of Madras, Madras, 1990).

29. South Indian Inscriptions(S.I.I), II, 66.

misappropriated the jewels of the deity. He received punishment of confiscation of his house and house site. It was during this period that decision to place Nayaks in temples by Vijayanagara rulers was taken to prevent corruption.³⁰ In this gradual process, the Nayaks directly shared the administration of temples in particular localities. Achyutappa Nayaka of Thanjavur obtained many temple villages, protectorship of temple treasury, and also had share in the administration of Srimushnam temple.³¹ Kattisura Nayaka of Pataivitu became the Secretary, Supervisor and Chief Executive of Devikapuram temple. Krishnappa Nayaka of Gingee controlled the affairs of Chidambaram temple.³² Tirumalai Nayaka, ruler of Pataivitu was the temple authority for assigning temple lands to individuals. As the temples also had large agricultural lands, villages and income, the Nayaks as protectors of temples under their claim, controlled the local institution of temples. The proper maintenance of temple accounts became essential.³³ The duty of writing and maintaining local accounts was distributed to a group of four Nayaks who were held responsible individually for different functions. They maintained the local accounts under two heads of revenue called income and expenditure.³⁴ These evidences prove that the interests of Nayaks had centered around the revenue of temples. Thus, earlier inscriptions record that Nayaks were appointed as local accountants in

30. Subramania Sastri, ***Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam Epigraphical Series***, Madras, 1930, p.167.

31. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy , No. 270/1916.

32. Ibid., 356/1912.

33. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy ., No. 372/1912.

34. South Indian Inscriptions ., Vol. V, No. 1403.

temples for writing the accounts.³⁵ Later epigraphs mention that accountants were appointed by Nayaks for writing temple accounts of Devikapuram, and Tiruttani during 1533A.D. and 1560 A.D.³⁶ The reason for such a development is seen in the Amuktamalyada where Krishnadevaraya mentions the need for a separate revenue administration of temples and subordinate Nayak rulers, since there was possibility of mixing the income of temples and subordinate rulers and adjust the revenue by sending it to the royal treasury for the loss caused by the revenue collectors.³⁷ The fact that a separate revenue system insisted to be maintained by temples and rulers was certainly to help the collection of Even if the revenue collector had indulged in revenue misappropriation, it was possible that only some part of the revenue would alone be ruined. The process of managing the affairs of temples directly by Nayaks began to change in course of time substantially. They began to appoint atikaris, rayacam, srikaryam, maniyam, samprati, servants, dancers, enquiry officers, accountants, super intendents and various others in temples.³⁸ Inscriptions record that the temples at Tirupati, Kalakhasti and Kanjipuram had two super intendents while earlier super intendent appointed by the temple had continued, new super intendent was posted by the Nayaka ruler with specific privileges, duties and responsibilities.³⁹ The koviloluku records

35. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 298/1912.

36. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., 356/1912 and 133/1942-43.

37. K.A.Nilakantasastri and N. Venkataramaya, **Further Sources of Vijayanagar History**, Madras, 1946, Vol. III, p. 154.

38. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., No. 127/1956 and 159/1919.

39. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, No. 89/1906.

mention that these new appointments were opposed and represented by Sthanattars of temples because it was considered a sort of imposition. However, later inscriptions distinctly record that the Nayaks appointed temple officials whose administration had become firm, and replaced the officials appointed by temples.⁴⁰ Now it ultimately resulted in limited activities of temple Sthanattars who were controlled by government appointed superintendents. A contemporary record suggests that the royal super intendent Koppuri Oparajayya was moved up from the post of atikari to the status of srikaryam in a temple.⁴¹ Another evidence mentions that the ruler appointed a committee to repair the temple, issuing orders choosing, his trustworthy men. These examples show that Nayaks selected their own men in the appointments to temples. The authority exercised by Nayaks reached its climax where we find an inscriptional text beginning with the invocation to Ethiraju Nayaka deviating from the general pattern in invocation to the deity of the temple which was found common in all inscriptions.⁴² In this case the decisions had been made in an agreement reached among the temple staff about their duties, without any short comings in temple. Allocation and reallocation of temple works were cast in the form of Nayaka order. Further evidence suggests that the right of supervising the temple in the hands of one Ramayya was cancelled and Lakshmi Kumara Tatacharya was appointed by a Nayak as the manager of

40. Ibid.

41. ***Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam Epigraphical Series Report.***, Vol. III, No. 167, pp.344-345.

42. R. Nagasamy(ed), ***Chennai Managarkawettukal***, Madras, 1930, No.79/1967.

the temple for a revenue contract of five hundred pon.⁴³ This new supervisor had appointed a number of agents placed at different temples in various places of the region and levied tribute from the agents together with the treasurer and the manager. Thus, revenue farming in temple administration was introduced in this period.⁴⁴ Tiruppanangadu inscriptions attest to the employment of number of people in the temples for various services during the Vijayanagar period. Another inscription from the same place dated 1380 A.D issued in the reign of Kampana-Udaiyar records the appointment of three shepherd residents of the place as tiruvilakkukkudi for the supply of 1 alakku of ghee and 2 nali of milk each for god in the temple. It is told that necessary endowments were made to the shepherds. A fifteenth century inscription from Triuppudaimaruthur, Tirunelveli district, dated 1499 A.D records the grant of land and daily food to a dancing girl (devaradiyar) Kalattinatha-Manikkattal and her descendants for their services in the temple by the temple authorities. Likewise, a sixteenth century inscription from Tiruvadi, South Arcot district, records the gift of 2 ma of wet land, 1 ma of dry land and a house-site to a poet who compose poems for the god by the temple authorities. Numerous other inscriptions suggest that the employment of temple servants and assignment of land for their maintenance, viz., for cleaning the temple floor, keeping the sanctuary lamp alight, keeping the temple yard clean, persons who fetched water for bathing the deity, cooking in the temple kitchen, tending the temple garden, drummers, conch, blowers, stonemasons, songsters, potters, carpenters,

43. Ibid., 1920, p. 115.

44. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, No. 147/1916.

bhattas, sivabhramans, dancing girls, and goldsmith was very much in vogue during the period under study. Besides assigning lands to the temple servants as wages for their services, temples also paid them in way of kind, kind and money or money. The appointment of most of the temple servants was generally hereditary. The Nayaks of Madurai are considered as remarkable examples of Dravidian architecture. During their rule, several religious monuments and temples were built or renovated. They are primarily associated with architectural wonders, their influence on religious monuments and cultural heritage in the region is significant. These structures continue to be major attractions for tourists and pilgrims, showcasing the rich historical and architectural heritage of Madurai and its surroundings.⁴⁵ The Nayaks constructed structural stone temples which carried out the same style of constructing several storied towers or gopurams in the temples. It was during their period, number of gopurams increased in proportion to the number of corridors or praharams, especially at Meenakshi temple in Madurai.⁴⁶ Out of twelve gopurams in three corridors of Meenakshi Sundareswar Temple at Madurai, ten gopurams were constructed during the period of the Nayaks. They were the last great rulers of the Madurai Kingdom who built massive structural temples with huge towers in abundance. Though the style of gopuram construction begun under the later Pandya rulers, it attained a monumental testimony with grace and beauty only during the reign of the Nayaks. Standing monuments

45. S. George Michael, ***The Hindu Temple***, New Delhi, 1977, p.58.

46. James Pergusson, ***History of Indian and Eastern Architecture***, New Delhi, 1972, p.365.

reveal the artistic genius and the aesthetic taste, interest and efforts of the Nayak rulers, also they reflect the culture of their age.⁴⁷ After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1565, the viceroys in the southern region namely the Nayaks, gradually assumed independent rule at Senji, Tanjore and Madurai. Of these Madurai and Tanjore Nayaks contributed immensely for the development of architecture and sculpture. The temple construction became the primary task for transforming military authority into political legitimacy. The local Nayaks attempted to establish their power by linking the regime with religion. The enormous revenue they derived from land coupled with unlimited command of forced labour enabled them to execute the stupendous works. The large share of gross produce which the government appropriated as revenue of the State was diverted for the construction of spacious temples.⁴⁸ The Nayaks with their feudal background, built many strategic fortresses, big palaces, large temples with huge towers. They were remarkable for the massiveness of their size and of decoration, sculpture and paintings. Many of these works remain perfect specimens of arts represented the 16th and 17th centuries.⁴⁹ The last stages of the Vijayanagar architecture flourished in Tamil country popularly called the Madura style, attained the zenith under the Nayaks. The number of temples of the Madura class mounted to nearly thirty. But the great temples at Madurai, Srirangam, Jambukesava, Tiruvarur, Rameswaram, Tirunelveli,

47. Ibid., p.380

48. Robert Sewell, ***The Historical Inscriptions of South India and Outlines of Political History***, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 287-288.

49. Henry Heras, ***South India under the Vijayanagar Empire, Vol II***, New Delhi, 1980, p. 359

Tiruvannamalai and Srivilliputtur seemed more important. In this period temples became elaborate both in structure and organization. Old temples were amplified by the addition of pillared halls, pavilion and other subordinate structures. The most important characteristic of such additions are the kalyana mandapa and thousand pillared mandapa with huge halls.⁵⁰ One of the best specimens of architecture and sculpture are found in the great Temple at Madurai. Krishna Virappa (1682-1689), Muthu Virappa (1609-1623), Vijayaranga Chokkanadha (1704-1732), and other kings built the temples over the old Pandyan structures. But Tirumalai Nayak (1623-1659) built a large portion of the temple which appeared an achievement of the Nayak age of the 17th century.⁵¹ The great temple dedicated to Meenakshi Amman has actually two shrines, the first one dedicated to Siva as Sundaresvara and the second one to his wife, goddess Meenakshi. The structure of the temple swarms with sculptural figures. Virtually every space is filled with carvings of niches-pilasters and other forms . These two shrines take a large space inside the main enclosure, an area 850 feet by 725 within a high wall, with four large gopuras towards the centre of each of its four sides. In the main entrance through the gopuram on the east contains a fine pillared avenue 200 feet long and nearly 100 feet wide.⁵² The next entrance is the small gopuram forming the entrance to the second prakaram, a rectangular enclosure measuring 420 feet by 310. It has four

50. Francis, W., **Madura Gazetteer**, New Delhi (1906), reprint 2000, p. 42.

51. Krishnaswami, A., **The Tamil Country Under Vijayanagar**, Annaimalai Nagar, 1964, pp. 177-179.

52. SathyanathaAiyar, R, **History of Nayaks of Madurai**, Oxford University, 1924,pp. 255-256.

gate ways; one in the middle of each side. The second enclosure is covered with a flat roof; but is partly open on the northern side. All the court corridors and halls making up these enclosures have pillar of designs arranged in long lines.⁵³ In the front of the Meenakshi temple is the 'pool of the Golden Lillies' an artificial reservoir measuring 165 feet by 120 feet, its picturesque appearance being considerably enhanced by the great mass of the southern gopuram over 150 feet high . Another important and spacious structure in the temple scheme is the court of thousand pillars added about the year 1560 by Ariyanatha Mudaliar, the Minister of Visvanatha Nayak. The structure is the veritable treasure house of sculpture. The mandapa has 985 pillars and they are erected in such a manner as to fall in line from any angle.⁵⁴ The 250 feet length and 240 feet width mandapa has life size structure of Ariyanatha Mudaliar mounting on his horse. Sculptors from Portuguese settlements were invited for the construction of the mandapam . The huge pillars have life size portraits of gods, women in graceful poses and tribal folk like the Kuravan and Kurathi, the hunter and huntress are also to be found in the composition of the pillars. Another notable construction of the period is Vasantha or Pudumandapam on the outside main enclosure of the eastern gopuram. Built between 1629 and 1633 with black polish granite, the ,mandapam, an elevated structure, was used as the resting place for the deities the summer.⁵⁵ The main building is actually a large corridor with a centre nave having an aisle on either side. The roof is flat

53. Ibid., p.287

54. Madura District History, 20 August 1816, M.C.R, Vol. 1258, p. 44.

55. Vriddhagirisan, V., op.cit., pp. 229-230.

and rests on four rows of stone pillars. All are different and conventional carvings. A rectangle three aisled hall measuring 330 feet by 105 feet and supported by 120 profusely sculptured pillars contains 50 beautiful sculptures. The portrait image is attached to the front of the pillar shaft.⁵⁶ Another work of Tirumalai Nayak was the Teppakulam, a great tank about a mile and a half east of the town. This reservoir is a perfect square measuring 1200 feet each way. On all sides surmounted by a handsome parapet granite wall beneath which run a continuous paced gallery. In the centre arises a square island with a lofty domed temple in the middle.⁵⁷ Another salient feature of the artistic works are found in the Srirangam temple near Tiruchirappalli. The Nayaks of Madura made new addition to the temple and put to final shape of the temple. The Nayak princess of Madura made Tiruchirappalli as a second capital and they started building the temple dating from the seventeenth century. It is the largest temple of South India dedicated to Lord Ranganatha. It has seven concentric rectangular enclosing an area of over a quarter of a square mile. Unlike the Madura temple, it has only one sanctum- sanctorum. In this temple 21 unfinished gopuras, thirteen of which following the axial line of the temple from one point of view. Near this eastern gopuram and within the fourth enclosure in the north-eastern angle is the hall of thousand pillars. A flat roof structure is occupying a rectangle 500 feet by 160 feet. Arranged in rows within are over 900 carved granite monolithic all leading up to a shrine at the far end. The fine full size monolithic sculpture of rearing horse with rider retinue and

56. SathyanathaAiyar, R., op.cit., pp. 219-220.

57. Percy Brown, **Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)**, Bombay, 1956, p. 97.

other animal figures engraved are noted features of the sculpture. At the side of the pillared hall is a covered tank, the surya-pushkarani and at the opposite or northern end of this prakaram is another tank, horse-shoe in shape called the Chandra-pushkarani, the two comprising of 'pool of the sun' and the 'pool of the moon' respectively.⁵⁸ The Rameswaram temple is noted for the wealth of artistic ornaments scattered in its architectural works. Its glory lies in the pillar corridors. The temple ground measuring 868 feet by 672 feet has architectural value. The pradakshina patha of the temple is the famous passage way which serves as a good example of massive columns. The most striking feature of the temple is its magnificent structure, long corridors and aesthetically carved pillars lining it. The outer set of corridors is reputed to be the longest in the world and the length is about 3,850 feet. There are about 1,200 pillars and their height is about 30 feet from the floor to roof.⁵⁹ A remarkable feature of Madura Style is the Srivilliputtur temple. It has the tallest gopuram in Tamil Nadu witness the great number of stucco works . The gopuram being built mainly of brick and plaster has thirteen storeys with an exclusive superstructure, forming the roof which is 200 feet high.⁶⁰ At Tirunelveli there is a double temple dedicated to Siva and his consort Parvathi and therefore divided into two almost equal proportions. The whole temple occupies a rectangle 580 feet by 756 feet. Tanks and pillars, pavilions occupy a hall of thousand pillars

58. Tamil Kalaikalanjiam, Vol. IV, Madras, 1956, pp. 301 and 322.

59. Srinivasan, K.R., **Temples of South India**, New Delhi, 1993, pp.184-185.

60. Kulatturan, G., "**Stylistic Features of the Sculptures and Architecture of the Mahamandapa of Ramasamy Temple**", South Indian History Congress, Vol. XVIII, kalady, 1998, pp. 493-494.

measuring 520 feet by 63 feet. The pillars are arranged in rows of ten with a hundred in each row.⁶¹ The Nayaks of Tanjore and Senji built finest temples in their kingdoms. The gopura with eleven storeys in the temple at Tiruvannamalai was begun by Krishnadevaraya, but completed during the time of Sevappa Nayak of Tanjore in 1574-75.⁶² Raghunadha Nayak (1600-1634) of Tanjore built the Ramasamy temple at Kumbakonam. The Mahamandapa shows the innovativeness of the Nayak style. The mandapa has two broad corridors meeting at central intersection. The column shafts have fully developed lotus brackets which carry additional corbels with seated lions over the essential aisles. The flat type of pillars present near the small portico on the northern side contains beautiful sculpture depictions. The sculptures representing ladies with seated lions over the essential aisles. The flat type of pillars present near the small portico on the northern side contains beautiful sculptural depictions. The sculptures representing ladies with musical instruments, flower and parrot are typical sculptural style of the Nayaks.⁶³ Ragunatha Nayak enlarged the mahamaham tank at Kumbakonam. The Subramania temple unit with viemana, ardah and mukha mandapas standing in the north-west court of Brihadisvara temple complex is a typical example of the Nayak temple of the ornate variety. The real gem of its kind was built of fine granite intricate engravings. In the northern Tamil Nadu, the Bommai Nayak of Vellore constructed the Kalyana mandapa and gopuram inside the Vellore Fort and Virinchipuram temple

61. Ramaswami, N.S., ***Political History of the Carnatic under the Nawab***, New Delhi, 1984, p.180.

62. Madura Collectorate Records, Vol. 9077. (No Date) p. 13

63. Ibid., p.17

near Vellore. The kalyana mandapa of the Jalakanthesvara temple at Vellore was constructed in the 16th century.⁶⁴ Many inscriptions reveal about the attitudes of kings for the construction of beautiful temples. An inscription of Visvanatha Nayak, found at Viravanallur close to Ambasamudram, dated 1551 A.D. revealed regarding the devadana and Brahmadeya lands surrounding Seranmadevi village.⁶⁵ According to Inscription dated 1560 A.D., there are 12 villages in Tinnelveli district granted to temple by Viswanatha Nayak and his general Aryanatha. This inscription also mentions Viswanatha Nayaka was a son of Kotyam Nagama Nayudu and Aryanatha was the son of Mandaraputtaneri Arya Nayaka Mudaliyar.⁶⁶ According to Inscription dated 16th Century on devadanam, Inscription number 187 of Alagarkovil speaks about devadanam provided by Vishwanatha Nayak. He gave Amanji village with people to Alagar Kovil.⁶⁷ Krishnappa Nayaka donated huge money and land for the rehabilitation of various temple.⁶⁸ The inscriptions of Visvanatha Nayak, dated 1562 A.D, establish at Tinnevely and Ambasamudram disclose that Krishnappa Nayak, the son of Visvantha Nayak has approved gifts of property to temple for worship and maintenances. According to Krishnappa Nayak I inscription dated 1563 A.D., In Krishnapuram town, Krishnappa Nayak I built a Thiurvenkatanatha Vishnu Temple, as well as Krishnappa Nayak, granted

64. The Hindu, 23 June 1995, p. 27.

65. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 721 of 1916.

66. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol III. p.58.

67. Alagar kovil kalvettukkal., p.180.

68. Adalya Journal, Vol.8, Issue 8, August 2019, pp.269-281.

numerous villages to Krishnapuram temple.⁶⁹ The granted villages were Thiruvengadanallur, Ariyakulam, Kodikkulam, Alikudi and Siramankulam.⁷⁰ All these villages were granted as a gift to the Krishnapuram Tiruvengadanatha Temple. He constructed this village for the Brahmins and facilitated inhabitation with theppakulam. According to Inscription dated 1569 A.D, the land was granted to Ayyanar shrine by Kumara Krishnappa Nayakka. Ayyanar shrine has found at Vijayapati which is around 20.5 miles from east of Nanguneri. According to a Copperplate inscription Kumara Krishnappa Nayakka grant land to a Shiva Temple in Radha Puram and Sthala Purana also speaks about it.⁷¹ Muthu Krishnappa Nayak I (1564-1572 A.D.) constructed Kadaiyam Krishnapuram and Krishnapuram town near Tinnevely.⁷² Villages like Mudduviramahipala Samudram, Tirumalasamudram which had the samudram suffix, donated to temples. These villages very thickly populated with the Telugus.⁷³ Krishnappa Nayaka granted Devadhana villages such as Ariyakulam, Pottaikulam, Puttaneri alias Thiruvengadanallur, Siramankulam, Kuttukkal and Alikudi lands to Thiruvengadanathadeva temple.⁷⁴ According to Virappa Nayak inscription dated 1570 A.D. there was a village near Ambasamudram, known as Adittavanama Chaturvedimangalam and Virappa Nayak appointed an accountant who was hereditary in nature was mentioned in

69. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, Madras, 17 of 1912.

70. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.IX, pp.328-342.

71. Antiquarian Remains in the Madras presidency by Robert Sewell. p.165.

72. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.IX, p.328 and Vol.V, pp.55-57.

73. J.Betrand, op.cit., p.144.

74. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol III, p.52.

detail.⁷⁵ Virappa Nayak' s another inscription dated 1577 A.D., mentions that he granted gifts to the priests of Krishnapuram temple.⁷⁶ According to Inscription dated 1578 A.D., during Krishnappa or Periya Virappa Nayakka gifted a piece of land to Krishnapuram Vishnu Temple. Krishnapuram is a Village located 8 miles from south of Tirunelveli.⁷⁷ According to Inscription dated 1598, Kumara Krishnappa Nayka gave many grants to Padmaneri Village in Nanguneri Taulk, Tinnelveli District.⁷⁸ The inscription dated 1605 speaks about Devathana lands like Kannenthal and Keelai Bhoothakkudi provided to Appan Thiruppati village which located between Alagar Kovil and Madurai.⁷⁹ Granite black stones used to construct temples, mandapams and palaces. Chokkanatha temple or kal mandapam or stone building at Tirupparankundram was constructed during the period of Virappa Nyaka. They granted lands gifts to the temple priests called as bramadeyams and created agraharas were temple priests living area. He also built nandi mandapam, single granite stone mandapam at Meenakshi Temple, Madurai.⁸⁰ Muthu Virappa Nayak inscription dated 1609 A.D. found at Madurai, mentioned that a village called Muthuviramahipala Samudram was granted to Brahmins. According to Inscription dated 1617 A.D., he gave a gift to the temple. Muthu Veerappa Nayak was giving importance to temple progress and he was a worshiper of Vishnu. So, he shifted his capital to

75. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 473 of 1916.

76. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 16 of 1914.

77. Antiquarian Remains in the Madras presidency by Robert Sewell. p.165.

78. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol III, p.33.

79. Alagar kovil kalvettukkal., p.98.

80. R. Sharma Sastry (ed.), **South Indian Inscriptions**, Vol.XIV, Delhi, 1941, No.3.

Srirangam. Inscription dated 1617 A.D., expresses how Muthu Veerappa Nayak gave a lot of gifts to temple especially Srirangam temple. According to Inscription dated 1617 A.D. lands to temple, Ramayya was a minister of Muthu Veerappa Nayak. He was a pond of Vishnu. He granted 1,000 Kuli lands to Srirangam temple. This event happened in the year 1623 A.D. According to Inscription dated 1574 A.D, there are two copper plates mention about Kappilamalai Shiva Temple in Namakkal Taluk. Thirumalai Nayak of Madura granted land to this well sculptured Shiva temple. Kapilamalai Shiva temple surrounded by many Madappas. These Mandappas erected during the reign of Nayaka rulers.⁸¹ Inscription dated 1635 A.D According to this inscription Thirumalai Nayak provided land to Aladiyur Siva temple in Ambasamudram Tehsil. This inscription is found in the Eastern side of the Aladiyur tank sluice.⁸² According to Alagar Koil Inscription, the third prakara of Alagar koil was constructed by King Thirumalai Naicker. During his time army men were allowed to stay there.⁸³ Thirumalai Nayak inscription dated 1638 A.D. remarks about tax imposed on village Pudukkulam near Madurai, collected and was given to the temple. Inscription dated 1648 A.D. reveals Vairravi Kulam is 2.5 miles from northeast of Ambasamudram. According to this inscription, Thirumalai Nayak gave land to a Sudra priest. Another undated inscription says that Thirumalai Nayak gave land to temple Ganesa.⁸⁴ According to Inscription dated 18th & 19th century, Inscription number 215 in Alagar Kovil located

81. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol. III, p.96. Antiquities, Vol I, p.203.

82. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol.III, p.5.

83. Alagar Koil kalvttugal, p.8.

84. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol.III, p.24.

in Right Pillar of Narthana Medai in Thirumalai Naicker Mandapam. A pillar donated by an unknown person as may be an unknown person would be a respectful person of Mannar Thirumalai Naicker. Thirumalai Nayak constructed Mandapams. The Nayak kings modernized and stretched the Mandapams of Madurai Meenakshi temple.⁸⁵ His numerous constructions of Mandapams to temples were mentioned in the inscriptions.⁸⁶ Thirumalai Nayak was generous towards the welfare of the people. During the reign of Thirumalai Nayak Mandapams constructed for Annadhanam. Rudrapati Ammal and Tholi Ammal erected Ashta Sakthi Mandapam in the Meenakshi temple for feeding food to the Paradesis or wandering mendicants. Nayak ruler's greatest contribution to temple is Mandapas. Pudu Mandapam was constructed by Thirumalai Nayak and this manadam shaped in rectangle shape. The measurement of one side is 720 feet and 729 feet and the other side is 834 feet and 852 feet. In mandapa statues of Thirumalai Nayaka and his nine followers can find with their wives. This mandapa consists of 1000 columns, a tank surrounded with arcades and the mandapa consist of four small gopuras. There is a statue of Ariyanatha Mudali who is sitting back of the horse. 'A copper plate has the possession of Samudra Pandya Nayakkar of Porruippumettupatti in Usilampatti, Madurai district belonged to the reign of Thirumalai Nayaka of Madurai. The copper plate records, in brief, the elevation of palace guard member in Thirumalai Nayaka palace, Rengayyasamy from Vakaikulam'.⁸⁷ Nayaks Manadam exposes the tradition

85. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 21 of 1984 and 391 of 1912.

86. V. Rengacharya, op.cit., pp.1615-1618.

87. Universal Review, Vol, VIII, Issue V, May/2019, pp.71-83.

and culture of Nayak society. There are numerous traditions yet practised and observed in the Nayak community. Wearing of big ornaments was the customs of Nayak community. Katholi, an ear big ornament was worn by both the women and men. Kambala Nayakkar caste men wore such big ear rings ornaments. Pudu Mandapam sculptures reveal beautification of nayaks. Nayaks community were fond of following scientific tradition by ear ornaments utilization by both female and male. Likewise, Pudu Mandapam sculptures reveal ornament utilised at the time of the wedding ceremony followed by the Nayak community. The bride of the Nayak community wore ornament called Mangala Pottu or Thali which was made in gold. The tradition of wearing Thali is at present also observed during the celestial and divine wedding function of Goddess Madurai Meenakshi with Lord Sundareswarar at the time of the Chithirai festival.⁸⁸ Chithirai festival can be in Kambathadi Mandapa and Pudumandapam Sculpture at Madurai Temple, which was organized by Thirumalai Nayak. Pudu mandapam sculpture is the great teacher on a particular society tradition that is how people dressed them and what type of ornaments wore by Nayak community during Chithirai festival. Lord Alagar was the brother of Goddess Meenakshi. Lord Alagar devotees on the way to Madurai Chithirai festival masked like soldiers and dressed like military men.⁸⁹ At present devotees dressed like military men, tradition is in practice. During the Chithirai festival especially on the wedding ceremony, turbans wore by the Nayak caste male members

88. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 73 of 1916.

89. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 16 of 1914.

and kurrai saree or handloom saree wore by the Nayak caste female members. Moreover, that conch shells bangles wore by the Nayak community women can see in the sculpture. At present valayalkara Nayakkar made conch shells and valayal kara theru or bangles sellers' street exclusively allotted for Telugu speaking people. Ornaments and dresses depicted in the Pudu Mandapam statues show Nayak community tradition and culture.⁹⁰ The Nayaks rulers were staunch belief in Hindu ideology and they believed Goddess Lakshmi, so they gave importance to flower and utilized for auspicious functions. So Nayak rulers constructed ornamenting pillars within the mandapam. Lotus models, plantain flowers design on the stones depicted. According to Chokkanatha Nayaka Inscription dated 1662 A.D., Chokkanatha Nayaka granted land to the priest in the Temple of Srirangam.⁹¹ Inscription dated 1662 land to Srirangam mention during the reign of Sriranga III of Vijayanagar, Madurai country was ruled by Muthu Veerappa Nayak' s son Chokkanatha Nayak. Chokkanatha Nayak granted land to Srirangam temple. According to this inscription dated 1700 A.D Ranga Krishna Muthu Virappa Nayaka gave land to Shiva temple at Tirunelveli.⁹² Queen Mangammal Inscription dated 1691 AD., explains that Queen Mangammal, widow of Chokkanatha, granted a land to a Brahmin, Prajotpatti.⁹³ Inscription dated 1700 A.D. wall to temple explains that Dalavay Narasappayyan was a minister of Madurai Nayak. He allowed Venngappayyan to extend and raise the external wall (outer prakara)

90. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol.III, p.18

91. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol.III, p.128.

92. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol. III, p.60.

93. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol.III, p.166.

of Thirumukur temple near Madurai. Kalamegapperumal is the main deity in Thirumukur temple. Thiruvali Alwar alias Chakkrathalvar was consecrated by Kalamegam alias Kangeyan also a popular deity in Thirumuhor. Inscription dated 1706 A.D also mention Queen Mangammal, the widow of Chokkanatha Nayaka granted many lands to temple.⁹⁴ Rani Mangammal palace in 1670 A.D. was constructed with Lotus flower which in an inverted.⁹⁵ Rani Mangammal constructed ponds in similar shape of Lotus and villages also named lotus such as Thamaraipatty and Thamaraikulam.⁹⁶ The great first female ruler, Rani Mangammal, of Madurai built choultries in various towns such as at Srivilliputhur, Cholavandan, Madurai and Trichinopoly. Choultries lands named Mangammal Chatiram and Amma Mandapam donated for feeding the people. Cholavandan choultries were built by Rani Mangammal in 1695 A.D., for the pilgrims who were come from long distance to the temple. Rani Mangammal granted numerous villages to feed people and construct choultry, namely Kariappatty, Chinnakadambankulam, Kattakulam, Puliankulam, Vellangulam, Nandigundu, Mannaginaru and Karukuvaipatty. She gave two Karais wetlands for choultry purpose and allowed to use for a free food charity. Akdhars and the Akdhar were Choultries adikaries. She granted a copperplate to Akshava Sastrigal. Srirangam grant peaks about copperplate to Akshava Sastrigal and it founded on the river Kaveri banks. Mandapam reveals society tradition and sculpture. A widow in Nayak society was

94. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol.III, p.24.

95. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.59.

96. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.59.

allowed to wear costly ornaments; beautiful dresses could be seen from Rani Mangammal portrait sculpture in nagara mandapam at Thirupparankunram.⁹⁷ Nagara mandapam at Thirupparankunram is famous for portrait sculptures with women traditional hairstyle. Thirumalai Nayak was installed Saiva Nayanmar saint Thilagavathi statue at Tirupparankundram temple. The statue head had right side hair clot and this sculpture expresses the real social nature of Nayak period.⁹⁸ Initially, the Choultry used for annathanam purpose later, it was used for various purposes. Amma mandapam at Srirangam Temple is now famous for Thirthavari festival. Rani Mangammal constructed amma mandapam as choultry for charity purpose and rest houses for pilgrims those who come from long distance. Choultry at Madurai was constructed by Rani Mangammal for religious tolerance. Mosque at East Veli Street, Madurai was a Choultry allotted by Rani Mangammal. She constructed Choultry with six blocks. All caste people allowed utilizing the first four blocks for annathanam purpose. The fifth block was allocated only for Brahmins and the sixth block was allocated to Muslims. Now Muslims built a Mosque railway junction opposite in that sixth block.⁹⁹ The Nayak rulers threw light on horoscope and depicted the 12 Rasi figures on the mandapams ceilings in the Tirupparankunram and Meenakshi temples mandapa especially asthana mandapam and Meenakshi Nayakkar mandapam respectively.¹⁰⁰

Queen

97. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol. III, p.60.

98. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 262 of 1941-1942.

99. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy ., Madras, 21 of 1984 and 391 of 1912

100. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy., Madras, 16 of 1914.

Mangammal donated considerable jewels, palanquins to Madurai Meenakshiamman Temple and similar endowments to number of temple in her kingdom. According to copper charter of 1692 and Telugu charter of 1701 A.D., confirmed, she endowed mosques and made village grants to Muslim Dargah.¹⁰¹ Nayak ruler' s statues are represented in statues as because of their dedication. Ministers of nayak ruler' s statue also appear in the mandapa to expose their work. Mandapam in front of the Meenakshi Amman temple is known as nagara mandapam as because of mandapam having nagara murasu. To indicate pooja ceremonies in temple nagara murasu is beaten by Telugu melakkarar family. The statues of Rani Mangammal and her minister Acharaya also found in the nagara mandapam. To perform nagara murusu in Meenakshi amman temple umbakonam Telugu melakkarar family was requested to stay at Madurai by Rani Mangammal Minister Acharaya. According to the inscription Dated 1695 A.D. King Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak gave grants to Thiruppudaimardur temple through his agents.¹⁰² According to an inscription dated 1715 A.D., Vijayaranga Chokkanatha granted Land for the support of illage god and Goddess in Tinnelveli district.¹⁰³ According to Inscription dated 1724 A.D., Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha granted a village to temple as the purpose of charity.¹⁰⁴ According to Inscription dated 1727 A.D., Vijayaranga Chokkanatha granted Land to a Padaram (Sudra Priest) for worship at Durga Temple in South gate of Trichinopoly fort. According to

101. Pramana Research, Vol.9, Issue 5, 2019, pp.221-229.

102. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.22.

103. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.59.

104. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.59.

Inscription dated 1716 A.D., Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha Nayaka granted land to Srirangam temple.¹⁰⁵ According to Inscription dated 1731A.D. Vijaya Ranga hokkanatha granted a house to Virodhikrit, a female responsible for worship and maintenance of Shiva temple in Tinnelveli. Though the grant was given to Shiva Temple, Anavattan Perumal deity was decorated with ornaments through this grant.¹⁰⁶ Inscription dated 17th century mention land grants to temple. 44th inscription of Kancharran Kottai village speaks about land donation. This inscription was poorely damaged. Words are not clear in this inscription. Kancharran Kottai village lands were donated to temple are found in this inscription. We can find few Sanskrit verses at the end of the inscription. The slogam like “ Darmathathai Kappathu Nanmai Tharum” are in this inscription. It can see at the eastern outer wall, Thirumarainathatha swamigal Thirukkivil, Thiruvathavur, Melur Circle, Madurai district. Both language and script are in Tamil. According to Inscription dated 1732 A.D, Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha’ s widow Minakshi granted land for a charitable object at Trichinoploy fort gate.¹⁰⁷ According to Inscription dated 1733 A.D., Queen Minakshi granted land to Samyavaram Temple, Trichinopoly Taluk, Madura District.¹⁰⁸ Inscription dated 1731 A.D, mention Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha had wife Meenakshi. He died without issue. Meenakshi adopted Vijaya kumara as her issue and ruled instead of her child. There occurred great trouble. Inscription dated 1733 A.D mention what Queen Minakshi granted land in Trichinopoly district. Inscription

105. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.127.

106. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol,III, p.59.

107. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.166.

108. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.127.

dated 1736 A.D says that Trichinopoly captured by Chanda Sahib, Dewan of Dost Ali, Nawab of Carnatic. He captured Queen Meenakshi, who gave her soul to the Madura country after her partner died. Because of the ill-treatment of Chanda Shahib, she took poison. According to the inscription, a great dynasty came to an end with her life lost. Queen Minakshi granted 200 kulis of paddy land to Pushpanathesvara temple in Karur taluk to cultivate 1000 Bilva leaves.¹⁰⁹ According to Inscription dated 1771 A.D Ramalinga Nayaka of Madura granted Land to Shiva Temple in Sankaranayinarkoyil Taluk. He gave this land according to the order of Nawab Asad Siyal.¹¹⁰ According to Inscription dated 1679 A.D Mandavadi village, 18 km northeast Palani has an Inscription mentions about land grants. Kadiri Tirumalai Sinnappa Nayakkar provided this grant.

The Madurai Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple

The Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple is known for its splendid art gallery where each stone and image depicts lot about the traditions and breaths the cultural ethos of the people. It represents the four major streams of beliefs namely the Saivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism and the worship of Skanda. The concentric rectangular streets, mostly named after the Tamil months, surround the temple, symbolize the structure of the cosmos and reveal a structure of lotus flower. Owing to its sacredness, the pond in this temple was named Pottamaraikulam or Lotus pond. A metallic golden lotus, that adorn the pond, was donated by Thiruppanandal Adheenam. The spirit of Bhakthi or devotion to the religious

109. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.73.

110. Inscription of the Madras Presidency Vol, III, p.37

cults of Hinduism, led to the resurgence and flourishing of Meenakshi temple to its peak of glory, during the Nayak era of 16th and 17th centuries in the Tamil country. This great temple built at various periods by the Pandiya and Vijayanagar kings, met with splendours under the patronage of the Nayak rulers.¹¹¹ Many prakarams, towers, mandapams, corridors, doors and staircases were added along with sumptuous grants, offerings, endowments etc by the Nayaks.¹¹² The four main outer gopurams of this temple, in four directions had a grace of their own and stood as a monumental testimony, to the artistic genius of hands that worked on them. All the outer gopurams of sky scraping pyramid structures had nine storeys and measured about 150 feet height each, and all of them were notable to have curved and concaved sloping sides.¹¹³ The east and west gopurams were built by later Pandya Kings in the 13th and 14th centuries A.D. The south gopuram was built by Sirapalli Sevvandi Mudaliar, during the Nayak period. The north gopuram was built by Veerappa Nayak, the grandson of the great Visvanatha Nayak of Madurai in 1600 A.D.¹¹⁴ The successors of Visvanatha Nayak contributed lot to the Meenakshi temple in the 16th and 17th centuries.¹¹⁵ This temple underwent many changes

111. R.Sathyanatha Aiyar, **History of the Nayaks of Madura**, Madras, 1991, p.145. p.251.

112. T.Vijayaraghunathan, **The Great Temple of Madurai**, Madurai, 2002 pp.25-32.

113. Personal Interview with Dr. C. Santhalingam, Administrative Officer, Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department, aged 67, Madurai, dated 02.02.2022.

114. R.Sathyanatha Aiyar, Op.Cit., p.81.

115. T.Vijayaraghunathan, Op.Cit, p.83.

peripherally and axially.¹¹⁶ The fine sculptures, paintings, marvellous architectural designs and impressive images available in this temple stand testimony to their ability, skill, taste and religious fervour.¹¹⁷ This temple was converted into a place of recreation, entertainment and celebration of festivals. Festivals and rituals were arranged in such way that every day the images of the deities were taken out in solemn procession with music and other paraphernalias. Every month, there was one festival or another and was celebrated with a planned programmes in a fitting and captivating manner. The Chithirai festival was celebrated with all pomp and pageantry for about 15 days in the Tamil month of Chithirai. Music, dance, enactment of plays were performed on all these days. The magnificent procession of the deities through the streets around the temple, in order to give darshan or worship was observed amidst the thrill and joy of the devotees gathered. This renowned temple of artistic glory and spiritual elegance has its own customs and conventions. It was customary practice to worship first the shrine of Meenakshi Amman before doing so at Chokkanathar shrine. The devotees normally use Amman Sannidhi as the main entrance of the temple. The structural stone temple of Sri Meenakshi was mainly used for the propagation of their Hindu faith, beliefs and philosophy, to the people of all through the ages. This fine media of propagating and preaching, the religious philosophy had much response on those days because the temples were the only places where people gathered in large number almost

116. D.Devakunjari, **Madurai Through the Ages**, Meenakshi Sundareswarar Thirukkivil, Madurai, 2004,. p.216.

117. T.Vijayaraghunathan, **op.cit.**, pp.24-30.

everyday. Asta Sakthi Mandapam and its hall were used as choultry for feeding the pilgrims and devotees during the rule of the Nayaks.¹¹⁸ Such facts indicate that temples served a lot in a theocratic state. The famous sculptural portrayal of Meenakshi's wedding, found here at Kambathadi Mandapam, in a pillar, with a majestic form of Shiva as a bridegroom and the shy, smiling form of Meenakshi as a bride and the appealing form of Vishnu as a brother to the bride and performing the religious ceremony of giving the hands of the bride to bridegroom called Daraivarthal in Tamil or the betrothal, not only reveals the observance of Hindu family tradition, but also it reflects the exquisite skill of the sculptors and the stone masons, in exposing their technical skill and capabilities. The construction of this mandapam, with the portrayal of Meenakshi's wedding, brought religious harmony and unity among the Saivaites and Vaishnavaites of his kingdom. The monolithic pillars are having innumerable statues, depicting Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu in various forms and in various manifestations.¹¹⁹ One of the unique features found on the ceiling, near the entrance of this hall is the carving of a wheel or chakkram, which depicts the cycle of 60 years of the Tamil calendar. The architectural style of erecting the portrait sculptures of the donor or builder, was copied from the Vijayanagar King, Krishnadevaraya, who introduced such a style, at Ranganatha temple, Srirangam.¹²⁰ The images or the statues found at 1000 pillared hall, are the

118. A.K. Paranthamanar, *Madurai Nayakkar Varalaru* (in Tamil), Chennai, 1966, p.229

119. Ibid., p.117.

120. S. Aruniappan, *Srirangam – The Paradise on Earth*, Trichy, 1987, p.22.

portrayals of religious and moral thoughts based on the vedas, puranas and epics such as Harichandra Puranam and Mahabharatham.¹²¹ This mandapam is housed with beautiful stone statues of Harichandran and Chandramathi, the heroes of Harichandra Puranam. The statues of Dharma, Arjuna, Bhima and Draupadi, the leading characters of the epic Mahabharatham are depicted in it. Besides that there are statues of Lord Shiva slaying an Asura, dancing Ganapathy, Subramaniyar, Vishnu and Saraswathi – the important Hindu Pantheon of Gods and Goddesses. It also contains the statues of Kannappa Nayanar, the Saivaite saint, Manmathan and Mohini, the notable beauticians and dancers and also a gypsy with his lady and a monkey – revealing the strata of the society and the social traditions of reverence to saint or hermit, encouragement to beauty, love and dance and belief or faith over prediction of the future of the human life. One of the peculiar features of the Nayak style of art was the portrayal of an animal, called Yali, with the face of an elephant and the structure of a lion with tail. Huge images of this Yalis are found in various pillars at different temples. The Nayak rulers never left the erection of sculptures of such animals, horses and elephants in their buildings. The steps at the entrance of the 1000 pillared mandapam and also at the steps in the inner stadium of that mandapam are decorated with elephants. The figures of the horses are engraved on the pillars in front of that mandapam. The quantity of pillars and the quality of the stone granites, create different sounds and music. Such type of musical pillars are also found near the north tower of the

121. T.Vijayaraghunathan, **op.cit.**, p.121.

Meenakshi Temple.¹²² Perhaps these musical pillars were erected by the same sculptors and masons, because the north tower and the 1000 pillared hall were constructed during the reign of Virappa Nayak.¹²³ The Madurai Meenakshi temple serves, still as a repository of Nayak culture by its various aspects.

Subramaniaswamy Temple - Tirupparankundram

Tirupparankundram, was one among the 14 Shiva sthalams in the Pandyan Kingdom and Sattan Ganapathi, the royal official of Pandyan Parantaka Nedunchadaiyan built this rock cut temple with a pond at Thirupparankundram in the 8th century A.D.¹²⁴ The Nayaks of Madurai, beautified this temple with huge tower and extended its complexes to what it is today. The worshipping pose of the sculpture of Thirumalai Nayak, in front of the deity, God Subramaniya reveals his holiness, way of worship and his veneration to religion. The life size portrait sculptures of Rani Mangammal and her grand son Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak are found in one of the pillars at Asthana mandapam, which was constructed by Rani Mangammal. Another sculpture of the celestial wedding of Lord Muruga with Deivayanai is the fine specimen of Nayaks art and it is replica of the sculptures of celestial wedding of Goddess Meenakshi at Kambathadi Mandapam of the Meenakshi temple. This Asthana Mandapam served as choultry to feed the people and later served as a military contonment.¹²⁵ The

122. Ibid., p.128.

123. R.Sathyanatha Aiyar, op.cit., p.81.

124. Indian Antiquary, Vol.XXII, p.67.

125. Ibid., p.6.

Raya gopuram of this temple was 150 feet height with seven stories. It was constructed by King Virappa Nayak.¹²⁶ This tower, consists of sculptures which depict the puranic scenes. Virappa Nayak also built huge walls around this temple.¹²⁷ Thirukkalyana Mandapam or Thiruvatchi Mandapam is covered with portrait sculptures which depict the Thiruvilayadal Puranam and Avatars or incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The same sculptures are found at Pudumandapam and at Kambathadi Mandapam in Meenakshi Temple. This mandapam was constructed by Thirumalai Nayak.¹²⁸ The entrance steps of this mandapam has two stone horses in a riding pose and pulling the chariots in a decorative and beautiful manner. These sculptures stand testimony to the interests of the Nayaks for cavalry and chariots. The sculptures of Shiva and Vishnu incarnations, reflect their religious policy of respecting all religious beliefs and faiths and promotion of Hinduism of their age. The Nayaks had faith and belief over horoscopes. So they depicted and engraved on the ceilings of the mandapas, the figures of stars and its symbols. Such figures are found at thiruvatchi mandapam at Tirupparankundram and at Meenakshi Nayakkan mandapam in Meenakshi Temple. Festivals such as Karthikai Deepam, Kanthasasti and Pankuni Uthiram are performed the Thiruvatchi Mandapam. The kodi mandapam had a flag pole, depicting the flag and emblems of the Nayaks such as the figures of pig, tree, sword, suriya and chandra in a beautiful golden pole. This pole was made of gold and had small carvings of God Vinayaka and God

126. South Indian Inscriptions, Vol.XIV, No.3.

127. Somalay, **Madurai Maavattam** (in Tamil), Vedaranyam, 1980, p.54.

128. C.Bose and Nadana Kasinathan, **Thirupparankundram** (in Tamil), Madurai, p.97.

Muruga.¹²⁹ Such poles are also found at Kambathadi Mandapam, Killikuttu Mandapam in the Meenakshi Temples at Madurai and at Kuthiyarkundu, a village near Tirupparankundram.¹³⁰ These poles stand to testify to the workmanship of the gold-smiths, brass-smiths and the artisans of that period. The Artha mandapam in front of the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Muruga, has eight pillars and in one of the pillars, the life-size sculptures of Thirumalai Nayak and his consort are depicted, with the pose of worshipping the God. It is worth to note that wherever, the sculpture of Thirumalai Nayak is found, he is depicted along with his two wives, indicating the existence of polygamy in the royalty of the Nayaks. The temple tower additional mandapams and sculptures, depict the significance of legends of puranas. Such sculptures are best specimens for the skill and workmanship of the artists and artisans of that Nayak age. The piety of Rani Mangammal is also expressed in the sculptures found at Asthana Mandapam. She is depicted in the form of worshipping the deities. This sculpture also reveals that how the woman of this age had their hair cloth put on the right side of their head. Likewise the statue of saint Thilagavathi, one of the 64 Nayanmars, had the same fashion of hair dress like Mangammal, which was installed by Thiurmalai Nayak at Tirupparankundram.¹³¹ The sculptures and deities in the artha mandapam are scooped on the rocks of this hill. The shrines of God Vishnu and God Shiva are located on both sides. Saivism and Vaishavism, the two main

129. **Ibid.**, p.96.

130. **Ibid.**, p.97.

131. **Ibid.**, p.97.

132. **Ibid.**, p.105.

branches of Hinduism are united here and that paved the way to religious amity and tolerance. The Nayak kings alone have constructed all huge mandapams of this temple.¹³³ Virappa Nayak I gave rent free lands for this temple in order to celebrate Karthikai Full Moon festival.

The Prasanna Venkateswara Perumal Temple – North Masi Street in Madurai

The Prasanna Venkateswara Perumal Temple was constructed exclusively for the Sourastras in 1644 A.D. and the presiding deity was Lord Krishna, the family deity of the Sourastras. This small temple with garbagraha and artha mandapam, are the works of Thirumalai Nayak.¹³⁴ But later on it has been extended with several mandapams under the trusteeship of the Prasanna Venkateswara Swamy Devasthanam Sabha, formed by the Sourastras in 1874 A.D.¹³⁵ In order to get the jothi darshan of Lord Krishna, the presiding deity of this temple, Thirumalai Nayak had his regular visits to this temple and gave gifts and grants for its maintenance.¹³⁶ Rani Mangammal has also donated gifts such as pearl necklace, diamond ornaments, lands and villages to this temple for its regular poojas, festivals and administration.¹³⁷ She too regularly visited this temple and worshipped God Krishna and donated money to this temple. Rani Mangammal permitted

133. S.Meykanta Thevan, *Arulmigu Subramaniswamy Thirukkoil* (in Tamil), Thirupparan dram, 1998, p.32.

134. Madurai Sourastra Sabhai Ponvizha Malar, Madurai, p.10.

135. Ibid., p.5.

136. Ibid.,p.7.

137. Ibid., p.8

the Sourashtras to perform Yajur Uppakarma ceremony and festival, like the Brahmins in 1704 A.D. The Sourastras considered Tamil as desa language and gave importance to the folk art called Kollatam Pasavanna performed in celebration, by them, on the next day of Deepavali a new moon day, every year.¹³⁸ The pious Sourastras became the natives of Madurai kingdom and they adopted certain Telugu words like vivakam or wedding, Annaprasannam or food, Upanayanam or initiation, in their language. They also adopted Tamil words Amma for mother, they called Mai for mother. Thirumalai Nayak, by providing all facilities and privileges to Sourastras encouraged the fusion of culture among his subjects. In order to manage the accounts of the Prasanna Venkateswara temple, a hereditary local judicial officer called Nattamai or Talayari was nominated from among the Sourastras. For example Nattamai T. Nannaiyar, gave gifts and created endowments to the Prasanna Venkateswara Perumal Temple.¹³⁹ The Sourastras alone have their houses in the Talaiyari Kurunathan Street at Madurai.¹⁴⁰ Due recognition was assigned to the Sourashtras in the Chithirai Thiruvila. The Sourastra priest of the Prasanna Venkataswara Perumal Temple only, had the right of blessing the devotees of God Perumal with the Sadari on all the days of that festival. The Sourastras bring silk clothes to the celestial wedding of Goddess Meenakshi. The very same traditions are still observed. Thus the Nayaks respected all religions. By their policy of religious tolerance, they accepted piety and preached

138. Madurai Sourastra Sabhai Ponvizha Malar, Madurai, 2002, p.11.

139. Ibid., p.10.

140. Ibid.p.12

humanism and gave importance to hospitality, charity and magnanimity which are reflected in their deeds and achievements. They accepted the lofty ideals and morals found in the religions and pursued the same in formulating their policies and reforms to the people. They accommodated all people, irrespective of castes, colour, religion, region, dialects and habits, provided shelter to them and propagated a universal liberal idea. The Nayaks were the real cultural promoters of that age and their services to the Prasanna Venkateswara Perumal temple will attest to this fact.

The Temples at Trichinopoly

The most important temple in Trichinopoly is the temple for God Vishnu at Srirangam and the temple for God Shiva at Jambukesvaram or Thiruvanaikka. Visvanatha Nayaka, built temples at Trichinopoly along with large number of mandapams and similar edifices at Srirangam.¹⁴¹ The massive walls that surrounded the temple in the Srirangam and some of its gopurams were also his works.¹⁴² His successors, contributed lot for the temples, located at Trichinopoly and its suburbs. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak, too had endowed to the Srirangam and Jambukesvaram temples.¹⁴³

Srirangam Temple

The temple of Srirangam is the abode of the God Sri Ranganatha, depicted in reclining form. It had a glorious spiritual and cultural heritage. The unique feature of this temple is its seven fold enclosure with huge dividing

141. W. Taylor, ***Oriental Historical Manuscripts***, Vol.II, 1833, pp.16-17.

142. Lewis Moore, *Trichinopoly Gazetteer*, Vol.I, New Delhi, 2000, p.127.

143. *Ibid.*, p.129.

ramparts. This temple is noted for the delicacy of sculptural decorations and veritable architectural marvels. The first three enclosures, namely the seventh, the sixth and the fifth, contain mostly dwelling houses of people connected with the service of the temple. The temple at Srirangam was built in stages at various periods by Kings of Chola, Pandya, Hoysala and Vijayanagar dynasties. But all the riches and splendour were lost because of the onslaught of Muslim invaders who ravaged, ransacked and looted the treasures. But the Nayaks caused the revival and restoration of the glory of this temple. The treasury of this temple was filled up with donations, gifts, grants of lands, villages and generous endowments by the Nayak kings and their officials and dignitaries. Chokkanatha Nayak (1659 to 82 A.D.) and Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak (1706 to 1732 A.D.), Visvanatha Nayak (1529 to 1564 A.D.), Thirumalai Nayak (1623-1659 A.D.) and Queen Mangammal (1689 to 1706 A.D.), too had contributed to the cultural heritage of this Periyakoil or Temple of temples for Vaishnavites in the South India. Over the years from about 1583 to 1732 A.D., they built edifices, restored others, created new endowments and enriched the temple treasure.¹⁴⁴ Their gifts of land, villages and jewels were added to earlier donations of that temple. The Nayak Kings intervened in the administration of the temple and revived the rites, rituals, poojas and festivals of the temple. Though the temple of Srirangam has undergone many alterations through the passage of centuries it still maintains its sanctity, popularity, holiness and hoary past cultural heritage, was due to the patronage of the

144. Jeannine Auboyer, ***Sri Ranganathaswami – A Temple of Vishnu in Srirangam***, Trichy, 1969, p.16.

Nayaks of Madurai, who revived its cultural glory. The holy shrine of Srirangam has retained its fame as an eloquent symbol of age-old culture and traditions.¹⁴⁵ Visvanatha Nayak, built many houses around the temple of Srirangam and encouraged habitation.¹⁴⁶ Further, he ordered to repair, renovate and erect new structures to it. The Koyiloluhu of Srirangam temple, records that Visvanatha Nayak spent about three lakhs of pon for the renovation.¹⁴⁷ Muthu Virappa Nayak I shifted the capital to Trichi in 1616 A.D.¹⁴⁸ His inscriptions, found at Trichi, dated 1617 A.D., reveal that he gave many gifts to the temple at Srirangam.¹⁴⁹ Like him, his official or minister Ramayya too had given a grant of 1,000 kulis of land to this temple in 1623 A.D.¹⁵⁰ Thirumalai Nayak offered tax-free lands, as gifts to it in 1642 A.D.¹⁵¹ He also erected the base for main Gopuram to this temple with magnificent proportions but it is left incomplete and unfinished. Chokkanatha Nayak set aside special areas for Brahmins, the priests of that temple.¹⁵² Chokkanatha Nayak gave tax-free lands to the priests of the temple in 1662 A.D. and also donated villages as gifts to the temple in 1664 A.D.¹⁵³ Like him his foster brother Alagiri Nayak gave a gift of two velis and four mas of land to the temple at Srirangam. The Nayak style of art is

145. V. Rangacharya, ***A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency***, Vol.I, Madras, 1919, p.1614.

146. S. Aruniappan, op.cit., p.21.

147. Jeannine Auboyer, op.cit., p.15.

148. Ibid.p.21

149. A.R.E., Madras, 134 of 1905.

150. V.Rengacharya, op.cit., III, p.1614.

151. A.R.E., Madras, 290 of 1903.

152. Jeannine Auboyer, op.cit., p.16.

153. V. Rangacharya, op.cit., p.1572.

revealed from the pillars and sculptures, found at garuda mandapam. It had 14 rows of 16 pillars except two rows of 10 pillars in the centre.¹⁵⁴ The outer wall of the Garuda sanctuary was carved with niches decorated by vase shaped columns or Kumbapancharam, the unique style of the art of the Nayaks of Madurai.¹⁵⁵ It was Chokkanatha Nayak, who constructed this garuda mandapam, and granted land and village to this temple in 1674 A.D.¹⁵⁶ His royal dignitaries Chinna Bommanayak and the Rayasam Basava Raja granted the village Mungalooroo to the temple.¹⁵⁷ Muddu Alagiri Nayak, the brother of Chokkanatha Nayak presented a building to a mutt, situated to the west of southern gopuram of the Chitra street, to the treasurer of Ragavendra Mutt and still the same mutt is there in that place.¹⁵⁸ This mutt is imparting religious learning to the priests, even now. These mandapas had fine sculptures and inscriptions in Telugu, would reveal the scenes from the Ramayanam and Vishnu Puranam. Annamuttammal, the mother of Rangakrishna Muthu Virappa Nayak, donated two villages to the temple of Srirangam in 1687 A.D.¹⁵⁹ Rani Mangammal, gave a grant of tax free lands to the Brahmin priests of this temple in 1691 A.D.¹⁶⁰ Rani Meenakshi, last ruler of this dynasty presented a grant of land for charity in 1733 A.D.¹⁶¹

154. Ibid.

155. Jeannine Auboyer, op.cit., p.21

156. V.Rengacharya, op.cit., p.1572.

157. Ibid.,p1765.

158. Mysore Archaeological Report, 1917, p.57.

159. Rengacharya, op.cit., p.1571.

160. Robert Sewell's Collection of Copper Plates in his Lists of Antiquites, Madras, Vol.II, 1884, Copperplate No.47.

161. Ibid., Copperplate No.49.

Their wealth and vast resources of the government were manifested by the temples of their period.¹⁶² Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak (1706-1732 A.D) took the administration of the Devasthanam or temple management and revived Thirumalai Nayak's arrangements with regard to temple affairs.¹⁶³ He went on long pilgrimages to important shrines at very short intervals and one such shrine often visited by him, was the temple at Srirangam. In this temple, he installed life-size ivory statues of himself, his wife Rani Meenakshi, his son and daughter-in-law in the western part of the second enclosure on a platform. This tableau is located opposite to the northern steps of the mahamandapam where the Utsava deity or the processional deity of Lord Ranganatha would enter for procession to Paramapatha vassal, during the Vaikunta Ekadesi festival, in the Tamil month of Markali, annually.¹⁶⁴ Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak built a mandapam and a mirror room or Kannadiarai.¹⁶⁵ The mirror-room was located in the second enclosure of the temple complex. Grant of lands were announced by him to temple and Brahmins in 1721 A.D.¹⁶⁶ Thus the Nayaks paid attention for the preservation, protection and administration of this temple. The images of the Nayak rulers in a prayerful attitude, reveal their veneration to religion, their interest in art and architecture, their mode of worship and style of life, their dedication to temple building activities, their encouragement to portrait sculptures, their respect for royalty and its status and above all to

162. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, op.cit., p.261.

163. Ibid., p.223.

164. S.Aruniappan, op.cit., p.15.

165. Ibid., p.21.

166. M.E.R., 1911, p.90.

encourage such donors to the temple in the years to come. The Bhakti movement in the form of temple worship, pilgrimage, festivals, religious discourses, performing arts like dance, music, drama and fine arts like painting and sculptures, gave impetus due to the patronage of the Nayaks of Madurai. A notable religious tradition was, to arrange every month, some special festival, in order to clean the blemishes that might have happened inadvertently, while performing the daily rituals. Thus the services of the Nayaks to the temple of Srirangam are immortal. They brought cultural identity, synthesis and continuity through their dedication and patronage to the temples of their Kingdom.

Jambukesvaram temple

One of the remarkable temples dedicated to Shiva, is available at Jambukesvaram or Thiruvannamalai, located to the east of Srirangam Island. As the image of the deity in this pagoda was placed under a Jambu tree or naval Tree (in Tamil), it is named Jambukeswaram and it is several hundred years old.¹⁶⁷ The temple is surpassed than the larger temple in the same island of Srirangam in beauty and architectural object.¹⁶⁸ One of the wonders of this temple is its perpetual spring. It has a hall of 400 pillars and an enclosure with 600 to 1000 columns between the two gopurams. The designs and the structures of these monuments, reveal that it would have been constructed earlier than the great buildings of Thirumalai Nayak and perhaps during the reign of Virappa Nayak I.¹⁶⁹ There were five enclosures

167. Ibid., p.340.

168. James Fergusson, op.cit., p.365.

169. Lewis Moore, op.cit., p.341.

with several small mandapams and two gopurams in this temple. A small tank is there within the portion of the temple complex. The image of the deity Vishnu from the pagoda of Srirangam will be brought here for one day in a year. It has an endowment of 64 villages donated by Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak, for its maintenance from the year 1730 A.D.¹⁷⁰ To retain religious unity and harmony among the two divisions of Hinduism, Lord Vishnu is brought to the abode of Lord Shiva at Jambukesvaram. This religious tradition is observed even now at Jambukesvaram.

Kailasanatha Temple at Natham

Lingamma Nayak (1595-1603 A.D.) the most popular Nayak chieftain of that region Natham, contributed much to the Kailasanathar temple. He constructed mandapams, chatrams, tanks and created that temple so that it is convenient for regular worship. Lingamma Nayak also constructed the compound wall of the Kailasanatha Temple.¹⁷¹ The sculptures and paintings in this temple are the great contributions of that Nayak.¹⁷² There are beautiful sculptures and paintings in the ceilings of the six pillar mandapa which offer additional beauty to this mandapa. Muhamandapa was the lengthiest one having 30 feet length and 12 feet breadth. In front of this muhamandapa, the Nandhi, the Vahana or mount of Shiva, is installed. Next to Nandi, palibeeda (altar) and flagstaff or kodimaram are installed. This flagstaff in front of Lord Shiva's shrine is covered with copper sheets gilt and with gold plates and in it one can see the

170. Ibid., p.342.

171. R.Sathiyanaatha Aiyar, op.cit., p.217.

172. Thiruppani Kaingariya Pattrikai of Natham Kovilpatty Kailasanathar Temple (in Tamil), 14 January, 1996.

emblem of Madurai Nayaks which constitutes the seated bull, sula, tree, sun and moon.¹⁷³ The Muhamandapa of this temple had pillars, and its ceilings had the paintings, depicting the scenes of Kandapuram. But some of these paintings got damaged while fixing electrical cables and lights. These paintings are miniature in nature. The birth of Lord Skanda, his child stage and then Lord Muruga and his marriage, the peacock, Shiva, Parvathi and the six children in six Lotus flowers are depicted in that paintings. Here the central theme of the paintings is Kandapuram. The paintings of the Nayak period contain either the stories from the Puranas or epics or the incarnation of Gods and Goddesses. The paintings of Rani Mangammal at Meenakshi Temple, Madurai depict Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam and the paintings at Alagar koil depict the scenes of the epic Mahabaratham. The paintings of the Nayaks reveal, their ardent love for ethics, religion and philosophy. The paintings in the ceiling of the mandapahelp the people to worship all the Gods of different temples in this single temple. Thereby it paves the way for religious unity and purity of thought among the Hindus.

Andal Temple - Srivilliputhur

Srivilliputhur, is beautified with a temple of God Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi in the name of Sri Andal. Thirumalai Nayak constructed a huge gopuram, and carved a chariot or car made of wood to celebrate the car festival, in the Tamil month of Adi, that too on the day of pooram, the birth star of Sri Andal. In order to chant the Holy hymns Thiruppavai composed by Sri Andal, in this temple, a trust, called Sri Andal charitable

173. R. Srinivasan, Temples of South India, Bombay, 1957, p.147.

trust was arranged.¹⁷⁴ Every year, in the Tamil month of Pankuni, on the full moon day, the wedding ceremony festival is celebrated at Andal Temple, Srivilliputhur and on the same day the very same festival is celebrated at Alagar koil and Tirupparankundram temples due to the efforts of Thirumalai Nayak of Madurai.¹⁷⁵ In order to promote religious harmony and unity, and to restore the religious beliefs, faiths and traditions, the Nayak kings had arranged this festival. Even now this festival is celebrated with the observance of this same traditions, in these respective temples.¹⁷⁶ Mangammal also granted a village together with hamlets to the Andal Temple.¹⁷⁷ In order to encourage the pilgrims, Thirumalai Nayak constructed way or road side mandapams, having six to ten pillars, in between Madurai and Srivilliputhur with a gap of 3 kilometres to each mandapam. Such mandapams are there now in a dilapidated stage, in between Krishnankovil and Srivilliputhur. Rani Mangammal too had made a road from Madurai to Quilon via Srivilliputhur and this road is still called Mangammal Salai (in Tamil). Thirumalai Nayak constructed a palace at Srivilliputhur. His life-size portrait sculpture is there in a mandapam, in the Andal Temple. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak too gifted lands to this temple. He often had the pilgrimage to this temple. Under the patronage of the Nayaks, the Andal temple was beautified with huge towers and large mandapams and was restored to its glory, as one of the Divyadesams of the Vaishnavaites with regular festivals and poojas.

174. The Hindu, An English daily, dated 24th January 2003, Madurai, p.3.

175. The Dinamalar, A Tamil Daily dated 7th April 2001, Madurai, p.1.

176. Interview with Baskaran the Asst. Commissioner of Alagar Kovil Temple, Srivilliputhur Andal Temple on 20th January 2020.

177. Mysore Archaeological Report, 1917, p.57.

Lord Purushothaman Temple – Uthamarkoil or Kadambanur

Uthamarkoil or Kadambanur is a place or town, situated on the banks of the river Coleroon, the branch of river Kaveri. The temple of this place is called Uthamarkoil, because Lord Purushothaman, i.e., Lord Vishnu, is enshrined in this Divyadesam of Vaishnavaites. As this temple was located on a vast plain field of two acres site of land at Srirangam, without doors, many men took refuge in this place during invasions. The Nayak rulers by their gifts and grants of lands, enhanced the status of this temple.¹⁷⁸ Thirumalai Nayak also arranged a annual festival called Brahmotsavamin the Tamil month of Chithirai or April. Pillaiperumal Iyengar, the famous court poet of Thirumalai Nayak, wrote a book in Tamil called, Nootriettu Thiruppathi Andadi, under his patronage and he has narrated the holiness of this temple.¹⁷⁹ Thirumalai Nayak encouraged such religious scholars, who eulogised the holy places and promoted religion in the Nayak Kingdom. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak gave grant of land for a charity to this temple in 1716 A.D.¹⁸⁰ Again in 1728, he gave gift of land for worship in this temple.¹⁸¹ The Nayaks revived the Hindu traditions and philosophy and made the temples to resume to its old services such as conduct of rituals and festivals and promote social harmony, religious unity and economic prosperity, as they were from the ancient days onwards, but before the advent of the Nayaks, they were disrupted due to Muslim invasions and intrusions.

178. The Hindu, an English Daily dated, 24th January 2003, Madurai p.3.

179. Ibid., p.3.

180. S.C.P., No.50.

181. A.R.E., Madras, 697 of 1909.

Mariamman Temple - Samayapuram

Samayapuram was a town, situated few kilometers on the north of the bank of river Coleroon, near Trichinopoly. One of the Muslim chiefs, the subordinate of Sultan of Madurai at Srirangam, had removed his headquarter from Srirangam to Samayapuram for reasons of health. He demolished the outer shrines of Srirangam temple and with that materials, he constructed a palace at Samayapuram. He was defeated in 1371 A.D. by the Vijayanagar prince Kumara Kampana, who constructed a temple for Goddess Sakthi called Mariamman in this place.¹⁸² When the Nayaks of Madurai, assumed power, they contributed lot to the restoration and administration of this temple. The famous historical city Kannanur was called Samayapuram. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak constructed a separate temple to the deity Mariamman and his wife, Rani Meenakshi also donated lands to this temple.¹⁸³ Thirumalai Nayak granted gifts and arranged for a festival in the Tamil month of Thai, on a day of Poosamasterism, which was his birth star. On that day, the deity Mariamman was taken to the Ranganatha Temple, Srirangam in order to get gifts from that Lord, who was considered to be the brother of this deity. So this festival was called seer (gifts) festival.¹⁸⁴ Except Kari leaves (Kariveppilai in Tamil) all the gifts were given by Lord Renganatha to his sister on this day. This religious tradition is even now observed by all Hindu families who are not giving Kari leaves to their sisters and daughters while

182. Robert Sewell, op.cit., Vol.I, p.265.

183. Ibid., p.267.

184. V.Rajendran, **Arulmigu Samayapuram Mariamman Varalaru** (in Tamil), Tiruchy, 1961, p.3.

presenting all gifts on special occasions. To make this festival popular, Queen Mangammal built a mandapam at Srirangam, called Amma mandapam where Lord Renganatha offers gifts, to Goddess Mariamman of Samayapuram. Even now the same tradition is observed at that mandapam, during this festival.¹⁸⁵ Now this temple is considered a renowned centre of worship of mother Goddess in the name of Mariamman in Samayapuram.

Mallikarjuneswara Temple - Dharmapuri

Dharmapuri known as Tahadur, was popular even during the Sangam Age. When the Nayak had their sway over the area of Kongunadu, a temple for Lord Shiva, called Mallikarjuneswara Temple was renovated by them. But under the aegis rule of the Nayaks, this temple was restored and was made as a fort. A new tower was constructed by Thimmayya Nayakkar, the poligar of that region, during the reign of Thirumalai Nayak of Madurai.¹⁸⁶ Thirumalai Nayak, encouraged even his chieftain or poligar to construct temples and patronise them.

Shiva Temple at Devikapuram

Devikapuram which is located 18 kilometers away from Arani in the North Arcot District has a temple for Lord Shiva and his consort Sakthi. This was a significant pilgrim centre, next to that of Thiruvannamalai Arunachaleswarar Temple. The inscriptions found on the wall of this temple reveal that, only Vijayanagar Kings and Thirumalai

185. M.Rajagopalan, ***Sixteen Saiva Temples of Tamil Nadu***, Madras, 1995, p.60.

186. Ibid., p.4.

Nayak gave lot of grants to this temple. To chant hymns from Devaram and to perform poojas, rent free lands were donated by Thirumalai Nayak.¹⁸⁷ In order to conduct festivals like Thiruvathirai, Karthigai Deepam and Pankuni Uthiram, many endowments were made by him. A tract of land comprising well, tank and garden were gifted to meet out the expenses of regular charity and festivals.¹⁸⁸ Mallappa Nayakkar, the poligar of that region, has offered 33 panams or gold coins to this temple.¹⁸⁹ Krishnappa Nayak I, have also issued grants to this temple in 1546 A.D.¹⁹⁰ Thirumalai Nayak granted lands to the temple in 1630 A.D.¹⁹¹ Thus Nayak Kings contributed lot for the revival of Hinduism through temples and its activities.

Perumal Temple at Thirukkudalur or Aaaduthurai

Thirukkudalur or Aaaduthurai was situated on the river bank of Kaveri, near Thiruvaiyaru, the birth place of Carnatic musician and famous pioneer poet, of kirthanas, Thiagarajar. He lived in the 17th century during the later Nayak reign. Thirukkudalur is a pilgrim centre and one of the Diviyadesams of the Vaishnavaites. Mangammal renovated this Perumal temple and restored its religious activities.¹⁹² In order to revive regular poojas and festivals, she also granted lands and gifts and thereby she promoted the growth of Vaishnava Bhakthi cult and Hindu philosophy in her kingdom.

187. Ibid., p.71.

188. Ibid., p.72.

189. Ibid. p.75

190. A.R.E., Madras, 391 of 1912.

191. Ibid., 388 of 1912.

192. Interview with Govindasamy, a priest of the Perumal Temple, Aaaduthurai on 06.01.2021.

Kasi Visvesvara Temple - Tiruchengodu

This temple of Tiruchengodu was an abode of God Shiva in the name of Kasi Visvesvara on a hill, called Kabilamalai.¹⁹³ During the reign of Thirumalai Nayak, the people of the neighbouring villages of this town, granted a village to the priest of this temple and contributed one panam per house every year and two panams for a marriage, to this temple.¹⁹⁴ Thirumalai Nayak also gifted the village of Kolangandai in Parittippallinadu to this temple at Tiruchengodu in 1659 A.D.¹⁹⁵ Chokkanatha Nayak, built a tower to this temple on a hill in 1663 A.D.¹⁹⁶ This tower had 5 tiers and was 262 feet height from the land. In order to perform poojas, rites and festivals, Chokkanatha Nayak gave gifts in 1666 A.D.¹⁹⁷ According to Thiruchenkottu Thiruppani Malai, composed by Athisaiva Aalambaya Kothira Sadasivapandithar in 1686 A.D., the Nayak kings spent money for the restoration of poojas and revival of festivals in the shrines of God Velavar or Murugan and God Arthanareswarar or God Shiva.¹⁹⁸ DalavayRamappaiyar too, granted gifts to this temple.¹⁹⁹ Dalavay Ramppaiyar under Thirumalai Nayak, had effective administrative control

193. Robert Sewell, Lists of Antiquities, Vol.II, Madras, 1882 and 1884.

(Archaeological Survey of Southern India, Vol.I and II), p.203.

194. V.Rengacharya, op.cit., p.560.

195. A.R.E., Madras, 65 of 1905.

196. R.Sathyanatha Aiyar, op.cit., pp.356.357.

197. A.R.E., Madras, 649 of 1905.

198. S.Raju, Kongunattu Samuthaya Avanankal (in Tamil), Tanjore, 1991, pp.295-297.

199. Thiruchenkottu Thiruppani Malai, Songs No.114.

over the Kongunadu Palayams and often visited the temples at Thiruchchengodu and Palani and contributed lot.²⁰⁰ The Nayak officials immensely contributed for the revival of Hinduism through temples.

Nellaiyappar Temple – Tinnevely

Tinnevely was an important southern political centre of the Nayaks. Visvanatha Nayak improved the town of Tinnevely by erecting temples, opening streets and introducing irrigation schemes for the growth of agriculture. A fort was also constructed around Nellaiyappar temple. The huge towers of this temple were constructed by him in 1626 A.D. and in 1646 A.D.²⁰¹ There were several mandapams called vasantha mandapam, ayirankal mandapam, somavara mandapam and sangili mandapam and amongst these, the ayirankal mandapam or the thousand pillared hall alias thirukkalyana mandapam was artistic and marvellous example for Nayak art. Vadamalaiyappa Pillai, the minister of Thirumalai Nayak constructed this Thirukkalyana mandapam in 1647 A.D.²⁰² A big car with stone wheels also was presented to this temple by him.²⁰³ During the Tamil month of Aipasi, every year, festivals are celebrated in the Thousand pillard hall. In this temple also, there are musical pillars. Visvanatha Nayak gave a grant of 12 villages to this temple in 1560 A.D.²⁰⁴ Muthu Virappa Nayak I, also granted lands in 1610 A.D.²⁰⁵ Thirumalai Nayak too, granted lands in the

200. S.Vaiyapuripillai, **Ramappaiyan Ammanai**, Madras University, 1951, p.17.

201. R.Jawahar, M. Selvam and P. Samynathan, **Nellaiyin Saral –**

Mahakumbabiseka Sirappu Malar (in Tamil), Tinelvelly, 2004, p.9.

202. Ibid., p.13.

203. Ibid. p.15

204. S.C.P., No.10.

205. V.Rengacharya, op.cit., III, p.1493.

villages of Thirumalasangudram and Pudukkulam to the Brahmin priests of this temple in 1657 A.D.²⁰⁶ Muthu Virappa Nayak III, the son of Chokkanatha Nayak gave a grant of sale-deed to this temple.²⁰⁷ Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak gave a grant in 1700 A.D., to this temple.²⁰⁸ Mangammal gave a grant in 1706 A.D., to this temple, for regular conduct of Poojas and festivals.²⁰⁹ Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak, the pious Nayak king also gave a grant of land to this temple in 1715 A.D.²¹⁰ Thus, due to the patronage of the Nayaks, this temple became a Saivaite pilgrime place in the south of Tamil country.

**Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple – Koothiyarkundu near
Thiruparankundram**

On the national highways, about eight kms away from Madurai, a town called Koothiyarkundu is located. It was the native place of Ramappaiyan, the famous Dalavay of Thirumalai Nayak. It was a Chadurvedi Mangalam where Brahmins and folk artists were found more in poulation. As it was an area of Koothadigal or folk dancers, this place was named Koothiyarkundu. It was mainly for the sake of folk artists, Thirumalai Nayak constructed a temple for Meenakshi and Sundareswara or Chokkanatha.²¹¹ In this Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, a life size sculpture of Thirumalai Nayak and his Dalavay Ramappaiyan are found in

206. S.C.P., No.52.

207. Ibid., No.167.

208. Ibid., No.168.

209. Ibid., No.110.

210. Ibid., No. 11.

211. Thina Thanthi, a tamil daily dated, dated 11, September 2002, Madurai p.1.

the pillars of front mandapam.²¹² The Vilva tree is the Stala Vriksha. This temple had a tower and flag post or dwajastamba.²¹³ In this temple also Chithirai festival is celebrated in a grand manner. Still daily poojas and special poojas are performed during pirathosa days twice a month. During festivals, like Navarathiri, Markali Nonbu and Sivarathri, the people around the villages of Koothiyarkundu visit and worship the Gods.²¹⁴ Thus to promote fine arts and folk arts, Thirumalai Nayak has given his patronage by creating hamlets in this town which was called Koothiyarkundu.

Temples at Krishnapuram near Tinnevely

Krishnapuram is a town, located on the bank of river Tamiraparani in the east of Tinnevely. It was built by Krishnappa Nayak I.²¹⁵ He beautified this town with tanks, roads, forts, hamlets and temples for God Shiva and God Vishnu or Thiruvengadanathar. The temples built by him are unique for their architectural beauty and grandeur. They had lofty towers and large mandapams with beautiful stone pillars, carved with marvelous sculptures.²¹⁶ Krishnappa Nayak I built a car or chariot for Thiruvengadanatha Temple and laid roads around this temple, for car procession, during the festivals. This Deity Thiruvengadanatha, a particular form of Lord Vishnu, was the patron God of the family of Nayaks of Madurai, because most of their coins contain such figures.²¹⁷ In order to perform

212. Ibid., p.2.

213. Ibid.p.7

214. Personal Interview with Swamynathan, the native of Koothiyarkundu on 25,th February 2022.

215. R. Sathiyanaatha Aiyar, op.cit., p.74.

216. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.ix, p.328.

217. Indian Antiquary, 1891, No.38, p.308.

poojas regularly and daily, grants of lands and villages are donated by the Nayak Kings. Krishnappa Nayak I, constructed a temple for God Shiva, at Krishnapuram,²¹⁸ along with agraharas, teppakulam etc.²¹⁹ He also gave a grant of six rent free villages, namely, Ariyakulam, Thiruvengadanallur, Pottaikulam, Kodikulam, Kuttukkal, Siramankulam and also lands in the Alikudi village to Thiruvengadanatha temple.²²⁰ Many valuable gifts were also granted by him to this temple in 1567 A.D.²²¹ and also in 1577 A.D.²²² Thus Krishnapuram was beautified with the growth of temples and that was due to the efforts of the Nayaks.

The reign of the Nayaks of Madurai, was a period of religious renaissance through temples. They followed a new religious policy of patronising Hinduism and tolerating other religious groups. This paved the way for great spiritual awakening in their Kingdom. They removed the barriers and conflicts between the Hindu Saivaites and Vaishnavaites and thereby promoted Hindu religious unity. They promoted Bhakti cult with more devotion, dedication and toleration. Visvanatha Nayak inculcated the philosophy of Hinduism and initiated spiritual awakening in the Kingdom. Following his footprints, his successors ,contributed immensely, through their sacrifices, services and charities for the growth of temples and revival of religious activities. As a consequence, more temples were constructed, renovated and widened with more mandapams and praharams with huge complexes. They were also beautified with tall gopurams or towers.

218. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, op.cit., p.74.

219. Ibid.p.85

220. M.E.R, 1912, p.76.

221. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. IX, pp.328-342.

222. A.R.E., Madras, 16 of 1912.

